EXISTENTIALISM

Prof. Alan Kim
PHI 247
TR 2:30-3:50
Javits 111

Office: Harriman 231
Office Hours: M12-2; W10:30-12:30, O.B.A.
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Course Description:
From the Philosophy course catalogue description: “Readings in existential philosophy and literature with special emphasis on such themes as alienation, anxiety, nihilism, absurdity, the self, value, death, and immediacy. Existentialist categories are used to interpret contemporary lifestyles and culture.”

D.E.C. Category & Course Objectives:
D.E.C. Category G: “Category G courses examine disciplines and methods that express the way people view the human condition”. This course has two aims: first, to familiarize you with some of the main figures, texts, and ideas of the philosophical tradition known as “Existentialism”; second, to explore these ideas as a class, through discussion and short writing assignments, and so attain a deeper insight into “the human condition” as our condition.

Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty
Cheating is bad in many ways. It involves deception and lying; in the case of plagiarism or copying, it is a form of stealing. Cheating corrupts the standards of the academic community, violating the trust of your teacher and fellow students. Further, it damages the cheater him or herself. Dishonesty is especially inappropriate in a course on Existentialism,
where one of the main themes is honesty and authenticity, and so would indicate to me a complete failure to understand the point of the course. Let me be crystal clear: any proven case of cheating or plagiarism, on any assignment large or small, **will result in an “F” for the entire course**. Any suspected instance of academic dishonesty will be reported to the Academic Judiciary. For more comprehensive information on academic integrity, including categories of academic dishonesty, please refer to the academic judiciary website at [http://www.stonybrook.edu/uaa/academicjudiciary/](http://www.stonybrook.edu/uaa/academicjudiciary/)

**Required Texts:**
Beckett, "Waiting for Godot", Grove (080214442X); "Endgame", Grove (080214439X)
Camus, *The Stranger* (0679720200); *The Myth of Sisyphus and other Essays* (0679733736)
Dostoevsky, *Notes from Underground; The Double*, Penguin. (0140455124)
Plato, *The Trial and Death of Socrates*, Hackett (0872205541)
Sartre, "Existentialism is a Humanism" (0300115466); *Being and Nothingness* (0671867806); *Nausea* (0780811217002); *No Exit* (0679725164)

**Films**
"Woman in the Dunes"
"Badlands"
"L’Avventura"
"Taxi Driver"
"The Seventh Seal"

**Evaluation**
Cumulative Final Exam: 35%
Midterm Exam: 20%
Six Short Responses (1-2 pp.): 30% (5% each)
Attendance and participation: 15% (includes pop quizzes)

All grades, with the exception of the Pop Quizzes, will be graded on a **4.0 point scale**: A=4.0; A-3.7; B+=3.3; B=3.0; B-=2.7; C+=2.3; C=2.0; C-=1.7; D+=1.3; D=1.0; F=0.7 and below. This numerical scale will also be used in calculating your course grade.

**Class Preparation, Participation, Procedures**
*Preparation.* This course is **reading-intensive**, especially since it includes works of literature. You should expect to do about 100-150 pages of reading per week, although there will also be weeks with much less reading. There will never be more than 150 pp. in any given week, and the longer readings will only be literary, not “philosophy”. Another way of putting it: You should expect to spend between 5 and 10 hours reading per week, although again I would expect an average week to be closer to 5 than 10 hours; we can discuss the reading load as we move forward.

Since this class meets Tuesdays and Thursdays, it’s important that you do a good deal of the reading over the weekends, so that you don’t have a ton to deal with on Tuesday and Wednesday nights.

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1 Dates and times for films TBD.
If you cannot commit to at least an average of seven hours per week on reading in addition to the class periods, do not take this class.

*Participation.* For many if not most of the readings, Mr. Manno and I will provide you with brief reading guides that indicate the *main topics* to watch out for, and a few *questions* that you might try to answer while as you are reading the assignment. By coming to class you are indicating to me that you have done the reading and are ready to participate. To encourage continual engagement with the readings, there will be occasional *pop-quizzes* (P/F), that will factor into your participation score; in addition, every two weeks or so, you will turn in a “*Short Response*” to the readings. These responses will be graded, and can take the form of your own questions, observations, or objections to the readings.

All this reading and writing serves to support the main focus of class, which is *discussion.* Everyone—especially in this class on existentialism—is responsible for participating actively, although that does not necessarily entail talking. However, I will not hesitate to call on you even if you do not have your hand up.

*Procedures.* The class will be a mixture of discussion and lecture. Although we may change this format from time to time, I will usually begin class by inviting questions or remarks from the floor. Based on these questions, I will then give a brief lecture of 10 – 20 minutes, in which I will clarify the *main points* as I see them. We can then move on to an open discussion and debate. At certain junctures, especially when presenting difficult technical material in Heidegger or Sartre, I will probably lecture quite a bit longer, but there will always be time for discussion, and I welcome interruptions for clarification.

For class to proceed smoothly, it is important that certain rules be respected.

1) All you need to succeed in this class is your book, and a pen and paper. Therefore *no electronic devices of any sort—including laptops* are permitted in class. I realize this goes against the drift of the age, but I see no earthly use for a laptop in this class. If there is a special reason you might have to use one, please see me individually. To be clear:

**TURN OFF ALL ELECTRONIC DEVICES BEFORE CLASS AND LEAVE THEM OFF UNTIL CLASS IS OVER. IF YOU SURF THE WEB OR ENGAGE IN TEXTING OR EMAILING OR ANY OTHER ELECTRONIC ACTIVITY DURING CLASS, YOU WILL BE ASKED TO LEAVE THE CLASS.**

2) Please do not eat in class. Class begins at 2:30—please have lunch before coming to class or wait until the end of class to enjoy a snack. Beverages are fine.

3) Unless it is a serious emergency, do not get up and leave the classroom and then return. People getting up and moving about the room during class is disturbing and distracting to me and to your classmates. If you think you will have to leave, please sit near the exit and come and go as quietly as possible.

4) Finally, *always bring your book to class.*

*Note:* Repeated violations of these policies will result in participation points being deducted and will negatively affect your grade.
Tardiness, Attendance and Makeup Policy
Class attendance is mandatory, and your illness is the only acceptable reason for an absence, save for a death in the immediate family. If you are sick and cannot come to class, you must provide me (not the TA) with a medical note. For every two unexcused absences, your final grade will be reduced by a partial letter grade (i.e., from an A- to a B+, or from a D to an F).

Blackboard
Please update your email address on Blackboard. Reading guidelines and Paper Topics will be posted on Blackboard, as well as various announcements.

Disability Support Services (DSS) Statement
If you have a physical, psychological, medical or learning disability that may impact your course work, please contact DSS, 128 ECC Building, at 632-6748. They will determine with you what accommodations are necessary and appropriate. All information and documentation is confidential. Students who require assistance during emergency evacuation are encouraged to discuss their needs with me and DSS. For procedures and information, go to the following website: http://www.ehs.sunysh.edu, and search “Fire Safety and Evacuation and Disabilities”.

Critical Incident Management
Stony Brook University expects students to respect the rights, privileges, and property of other people. Faculty are required to report to the Office of Judicial Affairs any disruptive behavior that interrupts their ability to teach, compromises the safety of the learning environment, and/or inhibits students’ ability to learn.

Late Work Policy
No late Responses will be accepted, and NO EXTENSIONS WILL BE GRANTED, except for documented medical reasons or the death of an immediate family member. If you know that you will be away on the due date of a Response or the day of the Midterm, it is your responsibility to inform me directly of this fact and arrange to turn in your paper or take the exam ahead of time.

Seating
Depending on class size, a seating chart may be instituted for ease of taking attendance.
TENTATIVE SYLLABUS

JAN
WEEK 1: Background and Destination
T1/28 Introduction: What is existentialism?
R1/30 Plato: The Apology of Socrates (or simply: “Apology”)

FEB
Unit I: Kierkegaard
WEEK 2: Either/Or
T2/4 “The Diary of a Seducer”; “The Rotation Method”; and “Diapsalmata” from Either/Or.
R2/6 Either/Or, continued

Week 3: Either/Or
T2/11 “The Aesthetic Value of Marriage”
R2/13 “” Short Response #1

Unit II: Dostoevsky/Scorsese
WEEK 4 Notes from Underground
T2/18
R2/20

Unit III: Nietzsche
WEEK 5: Thus Spoke Zarathustra
T2/25
R2/27 Short Response #2

MAR
WEEK 6: Thus Spoke Zarathustra + Selections
T3/4
R3/6 MIDTERM EXAM

Unit IV Heidegger
WEEK 7: Selections from Being and Time; intensive summary
T3/11 – 3/13

WEEK 8: SPRING BREAK

WEEK 9: (Heidegger, Being and Time, cont’d.) Buffer
T3/25
R3/27 Short Response #3

APR

2 The Syllabus will undergo minor adjustments from time to time.
Unit V: Sartre & Camus
WEEKS 9 & 10: Sartre, selections from *Being and Nothingness*; intensive summary
T4/1 – R4/10
R4/10 **Short Response #4**

WEEK 11: Camus, *The Stranger*
T4/8
R4/10

WEEK 12: Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*
T4/15
R4/17 **Short Response #5**

WEEK 13:
T4/22 Sartre, “Existentialism is a Humanism”
R4/24 Sartre, Analysis of Camus’ *The Stranger*

Unit V: Beckett

WEEK 14: “Waiting for Godot”
T4/29

**MAY**
R5/1

WEEK 15: “Endgame”
T5/6
R5/8 **Short Response #6**

**M5/19** **FINAL EXAM** (11:15 AM-1:45 PM) in regular class room. **Be sure to double check the Final Exam time and date at the Registrar’s Website. It is your responsibility to know the date, time, and place of the Final Exam. If you miss the Final, you will receive an “F”; there will be no make-up exams.**